

SKOPOSTHEORIE IN POETRY TRANSLATION

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Abstract

This article is conveying about translation and poetry as two inseparable yet never-ending phenomena. The translation of this especially written narrative is somehow tricky as a translator is usually required to satisfy the TL readers by providing a decent result. Poetry in TL is most of the time expected to come with equivalent dictions and form as written in SL.

The writer here is trying to apply the notion of Skopostheorie in translating poetry. Based on the theory of skopos or 'purpose', one can choose to translate from SL to TL based on the purpose of the need. In the article, the writer gives the examples of two poems with different purpose of translating: One for the sake of the diction, while the other is for the sake of the form.

At the level of conclusion, the Skopostheorie admits that not all ideals can be reached during the quest of poetry translation. Suggested by the Skopostheorie, a poetry translation has to have its own purpose and not to meddle it with others in order to produce a focused TL product.

Key words: *skopos, poetry, diction, form*

Introduction

Poetry is one of the genres of literary work of art which has special forms and meaning. Unlike other kinds of fictions, poetry or poems are arranged by specially chosen manner. These are the elements of a poem (Wellek and Warren, 1956: 145):

1. Sound stratum: Euphony, rhythm, and meter
 - **Euphony:** The harmonious effect when the sounds of the words connect with the meaning in a way pleasing to the hearer's ear and mind (Kennedy and Gioia, 2002: 671).
 - **Rhythm:** The pattern of stresses and pauses in a poem (Kennedy and Gioia, 2002: 677).
 - **Meter:** The traditional basic organization device in a poetry; the meter is denoted by the recurrent, regular, rhythmic pattern in verse. Meters are different according to their difference of patterns of recurring sound (Kennedy and Gioia, 2002: 674).

2. The unit of meaning as the determiner the structure of the poem's formal linguistics
 The same unit of meaning also helps the attempt to find out the style and systematic stylistics of the poem. Cited from Aiwei Shi's article on the use of style and stylistics for translation, there are three aspects to concentrate on poetry style (Aiwei, 2010):
 - **Writer's style:** Concerns about 'how' the author writes, not 'what' to write.
 - **Genre style:** Literary works are made with various genres such as biographies and autobiographies, children's literature, history writing, science writing, poetry, short stories and so forth. This article, of course, only focuses on poetry.
 - **Historical style:** Especially in English literature, there were two denoting era which determine certain styles – the classic and romantic movements. While the classic movement is clearer, elegant, symmetric, and holds fast to traditional forms, the romantic writers were using arbitrary literary rules in pouring down their personal reactions to life.
3. Image and metaphor as the central of the poetic discussions
 - **Image:** A word or series of words that refers to any sensory experience (generally sight, although not limited to; the sense of sound, touch, smell, and taste can work as well). An image is the direct or literal recreation of physical experience and adds immediacy to literary language (Kennedy and Gioia, 2002: 673).
 - **Metaphor:** A statement which denotes that a thing *refers to* something else, which, in literal sense, is not. By suggesting that a thing is something else, a metaphor creates a close association between the two entities which usually have similarities (Kennedy and Gioia, 2002: 674).
4. Certain "world" of poetic symbol and 'myth' as its system of symbol
 - **Symbol:** Can be in form of a person, place, or a thing which is established by the poet to suggest the meanings beyond its literal sense. Compared to allegory, a symbol is more complex. An allegory only holds one certain meaning; meanwhile a symbol usually has multiple meanings and associations (Kennedy and Gioia, 2002: 679).
 - **Myth:** Myth is the traditional narrative of anonymous authorship protruding from a culture's oral tradition. Myth has the characteristic as irrational and intuitive. Every aspect in myth is explained with cosmic view based on values and beliefs which run for generations (Kennedy and Gioia, 2002: 674).

Simply quoting Robert Frost, a rather shocking comment came from this poet that poetry and translation do not get along well or in his

words, poetry “is what lost in translation” (Kennedy and Gioia, 2002: 329). Frost’s statement, however, is one to be broken by many translation theories which are found to contradict such thought.

One theory which tries to accommodate the translation of poetry is the *Skopostheorie*. *Skopostheorie* is derived from the Greek word *skopos*, means ‘purpose’ which was developed by Hans J. Vermeer which is explained in detail in Vermeer’s book co-authored by Reiss in 1984 (Nord, 2001: 29). The key principle of this theory is that any translation process is the purpose (*Skopos*) of the overall translation action. The principle fits with ‘intentionality’ which is the part of any definition of action (Nord, 2001: 27).

Similar to the act of translating other literary works, poetry translation is also required to maintain a poem’s equivalence between its SL and TL. There are four equivalence requirements formulated in translating a literary work and problems the translators face in fulfilling the requirements (Nord, 2001: 89-91). Towards these problems, the *Skopostheorie* offers solution for each (Nord, 2001: 92-93):

1. Interpretation

- **Equivalence requirement 1:** The translator’s interpretation should be identical with the sender’s intention.
- **Problem:** However, the openness specific to literary text may lead to various interpretations at once. Therefore the equivalence requirement is barely possible to realize since different comprehension and interpretation will result different products by different translators.
- **Solution:** The translator interprets the ST not only with regard to the sender’s intention but also with regard to its compatibility with the target situation.

2. Text Function

- **Equivalence requirement 2:** The translator should verbalize the sender’s intention in such a way that the target text is able to achieve the same function in the target culture as that which the source text achieved in the source culture.
- **Problem:** Although a translator can easily translate certain diction, its function sometimes failed to fulfill the equivalence requirement as two different cultures mostly have different functions. In some cases, some ST situations have been formed within various functions that the TT could not follow. In other case, the ST functions simply can not work with target receivers.
- **Solution:** The TT should be composed in such a way that it fulfills functions in the target situation that are compatible with the sender’s intention.

3. Cultural Distance

- **Equivalence requirement 3:** The target receiver should understand the text world of the translation in the same way as the source receivers understood the text world of the original.
 - **Problem:** When dealing with large language area or older text, the requirement cannot be fulfilled since the translator should have to ask which of the various possible ST receivers should be taken into account.
 - **Solution:** The text world of the translation should be selected according to the intended TT function.
4. Text Effect
- **Equivalence requirement 4:** The effect the translation has on its readers should be the same as the one the source text has or had on its readers.
 - **Problem:** The TT can only achieve an equivalent effect when it deviates to the same extent from the standards of the target-cultural literary system. In addition, even the same text can have different effect on various readers that are very dissimilar from each other. That way, it is hardly possible to speak of the original effect, even within one culture or language area.
 - **Solution:** The code elements should be selected in such a way that the TT effect corresponds to the intended TT functions.

Analysis

To understand more of the application of the *Skopostheorie* in poetry translation, the writer uses two different poems in English as the SL. The first poem is entitled "Meeting at Night" written by Robert Browning while the second is "Over the Rainbow" which is basically the original soundtrack of the classic movie "The Wizard of Oz" first sung by Actress Judy Garland.

1. First set of poems:

Meeting at Night

Robert Browning

The grey sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

Pertemuan di Malam Hari

Pringadi Abdi Surya (translator)

Lautan abu-abu dan semenanjung tanah hitam;
Dan separuh bulan yang kuning tampak besar dan rendah;
Dan sedikit kejutan gelombang-gelombang yang melompat
Dalam ombak kecil yang menyala-nyala dari tidur mereka,
Seolah aku berlabuh di teluk kecil dengan merapatkan haluan
dan memadamkan kecepatannya di pasir-pasir pesisir

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;	Lalu satu mil dari lautan yang hangat-aroma pantai;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;	Tiga tanah lapang harus kulewati sampai bertemu dengan ladang;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch	Ada ketukan di jendela, goresan yang cepat dan tajam
And blue spurt of a lighted match,	Dan sorotan biru dari pertandingan yang bermandikan cahaya,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joy and fears,	Dan sebuah suara yang kurang keras, meluapkan kenikmatan dan ketakutan
Than the two hearts beating each to each!	Lalu dua hati pun saling berdetak—bertautan!

Elements of equivalence requirements within the TT:

- **Interpretation and text function:** Since it is impossible to know the author's real intention of the poem, the translator dealt with the receiver's situation here. General theme shows that the poem in SL narrated the secret meeting between two lovers at night. Meanwhile, the settings of the meeting are around the sea, beach, field, and finally a farm. The translator is being obedient by not deleting these settings. As the ST, the TT also presents how a man has to endure a long journey to meet with his lover.
- **Cultural distance:** The ST ranges a lot from sea, beach, to the field and farm. In TL culture, seas and beaches are common as in the ST culture. The problem occurs while the translator translated the words 'field' and 'farm'. In ST culture, although not written in the SL poem, a field usually refers to corn or wheat field. On the other hand, instead of translating it into 'ladang', the translator transferred the word 'field' into 'tanah lapang' which is uncommon in SL. Another deviation happens when the translator tried to translate the word 'farm'. Here, the word 'farm' shifted into 'ladang' while TT suggests that the girl lives in the farm. If what is inferred from the TT is true, then it is more appropriate to translate the word 'farm' into 'peternakan' where somebody can dwell.
- **Text effect:** As the ST uses several personifications, the TT also uses the same imagery technique. In the choose of dictions, the translator also seems to have good sense to choose poetic words such as 'pasir-pasir pesisir', 'hangat-aroma pantai', dan 'bermandikan cahaya'. Unfortunately, the rhymes abccba and dedded in the first and second stanzas of the ST do not occur in the TT.

2. Second set of poems:

Over the Rainbow*E. Y. Harburg*

Somewhere, over the rainbow, way
up high.
There's a land that I heard of Once in
a lullaby.
Somewhere, over the rainbow, skies
are blue.
And the dreams that you dare to
dream Really do come true.

Someday I'll wish upon a star and
wake up where the clouds are far
Behind me.
Where troubles melt like lemon
drops, Away above the chimney
tops.
That's where you'll find me.

Somewhere, over the rainbow,
bluebirds fly.
Birds fly over the rainbow,
Why then - oh, why can't I?

If happy little bluebirds fly
beyond the rainbow,
Why, oh, why can't I?

Di Seberang Pelangi*Micka (translator)*

Di suatu tempat di seberang pelangi, nun
jauh dan tinggi
ada tempat yang pernah kudengar hanya
dalam lullaby
Di suatu tempat di seberang pelangi, langit
selalu biru
dan apapun yang berani kauimpikan,
menjadi nyata di situ

Suatu hari, aku akan berharap pada bintang
lantas terjaga di antara awan-awan
membentang
di mana semua masalah lumer seperti
kembang gula
dan kegembiraan saja yang tersisa

Di suatu tempat di seberang pelangi,
burung-burung biru beterbangan datang dan
pergi
Mengapa aku tak bisa?

Bila burung-burung biru kecil itu dengan
gembira
beterbangan melampaui jembatan pelangi
Mengapa aku tak bisa?

Elements of equivalence requirements within the TT:

- **Interpretation and text function:** "Over the Rainbow" is basically made as an excerpt of the movie "The Wizard of Oz". According to Judy Garland herself, the message of the verses is of dreaming a place that is really 'over the rainbow' which means 'far above and beyond the rainbow'. When shifting to Indonesian language, the TT conveys about a place 'di seberang' or 'across' the rainbow. This, however, is interpreted rather incorrectly since the degree of distance between 'over' and 'across' are different. Additionally, the difference of the degree of distance also occurs between the words 'where the clouds are far behind me' and 'di antara awan-awan membentang'. In ST, the narrator of the verse wishes to wake up in a place *afar* from the clouds, meanwhile the narrator in the TT wishes to wake up *between* the clouds.

- **Cultural distance:** 'lemon drops' is a Western term for a sugary, lemon-flavored candy that is typically colored yellow and often shaped like a miniature lemon. In TL culture, there is no such type of candy. Therefore, the translation of 'lemon drops' into 'kembang gula' or simply 'candy' is acceptable here. Another case in cultural distance arises in the word 'bluebird'. The bluebird is American native species that the TL does not have its equivalence.
- **Text effect:** The translator's best point in this translation is that she is trying to maintain the rhyme of the ST in TT translation. In order to maintain the rhyme, one line of the TT 'away above the chimney tops' was omitted. In the second line of the first stanza of the TT, there is also an SL word which was not translated. The action is believed to be intentional to maintain the rhyme of the first TT stanza. Had the translator translated the word 'lullaby' into 'lagu nina bobo', for example, she would not maintain the poem's form. Nevertheless, based on the analysis of the interpretation and the text function above, the effect of the TT is rather deviated from the initial ST effect. This is due to the constant failure in translating the word 'over' from the ST to 'di seberang' in the TT. With differences in the degree of distance between the ST and the TT, regrettably the TT cannot convey corresponding effect to the ST function.

Conclusion

When Pringadi Abdi Surya translated "Meeting at Night" with his focus towards the dictions of the poem, he fails to maintain the form of the SL poem. However the translated version of this Robert Browning's work can be said as equivalently poetic to the original one.

"Di Seberang Pelangi" which clearly maintains the form of the poem also faces problems. In keeping up with the exact rhymes, Micka omitted one line of the ST in her TT. She also code mixed the English word 'lullaby' with other Indonesian words. Unfortunately, her consistency does not occur in transferring the text's function and effect. This makes the translation of the poem "Over the Rainbow" feels shallower than the original version.

Satisfying all reader's needs is an impossible thing to do. When it comes to poetry translation, there is always a debate whether to maintain the form or the dictions. From the short analysis of the two examples above, it is proven that whether maintaining the form or dictions of a poem has its pros and cons. Fortunately, with the notion of *Skopos* or purpose, a translator is allowed to have his or her standpoint in deciding how to translate a literary work according to what has been determined and intended.

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